

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NATO ASSESSMENT SERIES CONTRIBUTION

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TO AIG 6006
AIG 6007

NATO CONFIDENTIAL FROM WASHINGTON
NADA/ASSESSMENT/MAY 04/MFA WASHINGTON/
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR POST-TITO TRANSITION

SUMMARY: SHORT TERM PROSPECTS FOR AN ORDERLY TRANSITION FOLLOWING THE 85-YEAR-OLD TITO'S DEPARTURE FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE IN YUGOSLAVIA APPEAR GOOD. ALTHOUGH IT IS LESS LIKELY THAT A COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP WILL BE ABLE TO

MAINTAIN CLOSE COHESION AND UNITY OVER THE LONGER TERM, EVEN HERE THE ODDS ARE THAT YUGOSLAVIA WILL HANG TOGETHER RATHER THAN FALL APART. WESTERN INFLUENCE AMONG THE POST-TITO LEADERS WILL HINGE LARGELY ON HOW THESE LEADERS PERCEIVE WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY WHETHER THEY BELIEVE THAT THE WEST SUPPORTS AN INDEPENDENT AND VIABLE YUGOSLAVIA.

1. CONCERN OVER WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO DEPARTS THE SCENE IS ROOTED IN THE FORMIDABLE ARRAY OF CENTRIFUGAL PROBLEMS -- INTENSE ETHNIC RIVALRIES, INTER-REPUBLIC AND INTER-REGIONAL DIFFERENCES, PERSISTING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES -- WHICH THE NEW LEADERSHIP WILL INHERIT AND MUST COPE WITH AFTER 30 YEARS OF ONE-MAN RULE.

2. TWO SLOVENES -- EDVARD KARDELJ (66) AND STANE DOLANC (51) -- ARE THE PRIME CANDIDATES TO SUCCEED TITO AS PARTY LEADER. (THERE IS A NINE MEMBER STATE PRESIDENCY, COMPRISING LEADERS FROM EACH OF THE 6 REPUBLICS AND 2 AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES AND ALSO THE PARTY LEADER, TO SERVE AS A SYMBOL OF CONTINUITY IN THE STATE BUREAUCRACY.) REPORTS THAT KARDELJ, A CLOSE CONFIDANT OF TITO FOR SOME 40 YEARS, IS SERIOUSLY ILL AND MAY NEVER AGAIN PLAY AN

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ACTIVE ROLE IN POLITICS, WOULD MAKE DOLANC A HEAVY FAVORITE TO ASSUME THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY. DOLANC, WHO WAS HAND-PICKED BY TITO IN 1972 TO OVERSEE THE DAILY ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARTY BUREAUCRACY, WAS RECENTLY CHOSEN TO LAY DOWN THE BASIC LINE FOR PREPARING THE 1978 PARTY CONGRESS -- A FURTHER INDICATION THAT HIS POWER MAY BE INCREASING RELATIVE TO OTHER CONTENDERS.

3. THE ROLE OF THE ARMY IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS HAS BEEN MARKEDLY ENHANCED SINCE 1974 (WHEN THE NEW CONSTITUTION WAS PROMULGATED AND THE TENTH PARTY CONGRESS WAS HELD) BY THE INCREASED PRESENCE OF THE MILITARY IN ALL LEVELS OF THE PARTY AND STATE BUREAUCRACIES. AS THE MOST UNIFIED AND DISCIPLINED INSTITUTION IN YUGOSLAVIA, THE ARMY MUST BE CONSIDERED A KEY FACTOR IN POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA, NOT ONLY IN PRESERVING THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND INTERNAL STABILITY, BUT ALSO IN DETERMINING WHO WILL EXERCISE POWER. IN THE EVENT OF ANY PROLONGED FACTIONAL STRUGGLE WHICH THREATENED THE DOMESTIC ORDER,

THE MILITARY WOULD PROBABLY INTERVENE -- MOST LIKELY IN FAVOR OF A FACTION WHICH ADVOCATED A STRONGER, MORE CENTRALIZED AUTHORITY OVER BOTH PARTY AND STATE AFFAIRS.

AS A LAST RESORT, THE MILITARY ITSELF MIGHT TAKE OVER POWER IF IT FELT THE POLITICIANS WERE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO COPE WITH THE NATION'S PROBLEMS.

4. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SOVIETS VIEW THE POST-TITO PERIOD AS A SINGULAR OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE YUGOSLAV POLICIES IN THEIR FAVOR, EITHER BY POLITICAL/ECONOMIC INDUCEMENTS OR BY SUBTLE OR BLATANT PRESSURES. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE LEAST LIKELY COURSE OF ACTION THE SOVIETS WILL FOLLOW IN YUGOSLAVIA IS THAT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION AND THAT ONLY AS A LAST RESORT -- E.G., IF YUGOSLAVIA WERE RENT BY WIDESPREAD AND INTENSE POLITICAL STRIFE THREATENING TO TOPPLE THE COMMUNIST REGIME OR IF THE
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COUNTRY SHOWED DEFINITE SIGNS OF ALIGNING ITSELF WITH THE WEST (THUS UPSETTING THE STATUS QUO IN THE BALKANS AND EUROPE). HOWEVER, UNLESS POLITICAL STABILITY AND COHESION WERE TO VIRTUALLY DISINTEGRATE, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT ABOUT YUGOSLAV DETERMINATION TO RESIST EXTERNAL THREATS AND TO FIGHT FOR ITS INDEPENDENCE, REGARDLESS OF COST IN LIFE AND MATERIAL.

5. WESTERN INFLUENCE IN THE POST-TITO LEADERSHIP IS LIKELY TO BE IN DIRECT RELATION TO THAT LEADERSHIP'S PERCEPTION OF THE WEST'S COMMITMENTS TO, AND SUPPORT FOR, A VIABLE, INDEPENDENT, AND UNITED YUGOSLAVIA. THE YUGOSLAVS WILL EXPECT THE WEST TO UNDERSCORE THIS COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT BY RESPONDING SYMPATHETICALLY TO YUGOSLAVIA'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES BY EASING SUCH IMPORT RESTRICTIONS AS MAY EXIST ON YUGOSLAV PRODUCTS, BY ACKNOWLEDGING YUGOSLAVIA'S INVESTMENT AND CREDIT NEEDS, AND BY PROVIDING REQUESTED MILITARY MATERIEL AND MUNITIONS AGAINST REAL OR IMAGINED THREATS.

6. IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH TANGIBLE SUPPORT, THE YUGOSLAVS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT WESTERN INTENTIONS -- DOUBTS WHICH WILL LEAD THEM TO KEEP THE WEST AT ARM'S LENGTH AND TO BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO SOVIET DEMANDS -- ALWAYS PROVIDED THESE DID NOT SEEM TO THREATEN YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE.

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